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An Inaugural Thesis

on

Mania à Potu

by

Robert E. Kerr

of

Washington City. District of Columbia.

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# Mania à Potu

by

R. E. Kerr.

To reprobate the pernicious use of Ardent Spirits extensively indulged would merely be repeating the judicious admonitions of a number of the wise. So infatuated are the votaries of the poisonous draught, that deaf to counsel they heedlessly indulge their depraved desires and ultimately meet their ruin in what they most delighted. Prevailing in every Country under the specious appearance of balmy relief from the cares and vexations of worldly pursuits, do we find an unconquerable thirst for stimulation and exhilaration. Mahomet's laws do not protect its subjects from the practice of inebriation, for the Turks assuage the pains and ills of life, fire their flagging zeal and raise the powers

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of mind and body above their natural standard by the continual liberal substitute of Opium. Another preparation is recurred to in order to inspire enlivening joy and extacy of mirth and also to avoid infringement of their prophet's rules, which they effect by the leaves and seeds of hemp, denominated bangue. The consequences of either practice are equally pernicious, and subject the system to a numerous train of diseases which will eventually curtail the span of human existence. The consumption of Ardent Spirits in the United States is increasing to an alarming extent, and disorders of the human frame will always attend pari passu the increase or diminution of the use of spirituous liquors. The immediate effect of those potations is an exhilaration of spirit, attended with increased muscular excitement and sensorial energy; unusual vivacity of mind is evinced; the shackles of grief are unloosed; and

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unbridled mirth loquaciously exults at the downfal of ennui; the action of the heart and arteries is much accelerated, the face and eyes become suffused by vessels which before were destined for the convey=ance of lymph, receiving red blood. Increasing confidence assumes the stead of modesty and self opinionated merit is magnified into impor=tance. If the quantity of spirit is inordinate the effect is much extenuated and intoxication is the consequence. This debased situation is too familiar to be described and deservedly receives the execration of the virtuous. Every degree of stimulation in the same manner by creating an excitement and increasing the natural actions of the system, oce=asions an unusual expenditure of nervous influ=ence and consequently tends ultimately to produce a debilitated state. The very great sympathy exis=ting between the stomach and the brain, arising from the extensive nervous connection, also parti=cipates in the production of this altered and tor=

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-pid state of the system from the narcotic impres-
-sion which the spirituous liquors impart to the
stomach. Likewise the increased action of the heart
and arteries, occasioned by the stimulating nature
of the draught, impels a greater quantity of blood
towards the brain, occasioning congestion in
that organ, which contributes in producing the
torpidity alluded to as the consequence of intox-
-ication. So great in the previous excitement is
the call for nervous energy, and so inordinate
the supply afforded by the sensorium, that in-
-capable to support the extravagance of the system,
as soon as the stimulating power of the draught
is expended, the whole frame is left debilitated
and time and inaction are required before the
powers of the constitution can reinstate it to its
previously natural standard. Though frequently
an intoxicating fit fortunately terminates in the
way described, by the gradual accumulation of
sensorial power and restoration of the system from

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prostrated state which is the indirect debility of Bacchus, till by a frequent repetition of the habit of inebriation the constitution fails to withstand the impression and is unable so felicitously to restore the injured state of health. Participators in debauching frolicks too well remember their disagreeable sensations on the succeeding morning. Often are they aroused even before day with eagerness to satiate a thirst almost ungovernable; frequently they dream of pleasant and delicious draughts the sparkling rivulet and running spring. When they awake they realise the consequence of last nights indulgence. A violent and distressing head ache is among the first to indicate the injury the system has sustained. Sluggishness of motion with languishing & numb combine to render evident the struggle which exists between strength of constitution and invasive effects of their pernicious practice. The more frequent the repetition of dissipated indulgence, the more serious are consequences entail.

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at length the system stands the fear and yields to its relentless enemy. But it is to and the yet unconquered but contending state that medical assistance is required and when evidences are first given of superior strength. Thus succeeds the disease which is the subject of this essay and which has received the appellation of mania à potu the scarcity of writings on this subject deserving of attention is unaccountably great which is especially the more surprising as the disease is one of frequent occurrence. For or three days after a debauch the patient is much inconvenienced with chillness, pain in the head indigestion sickness at stomach and frequent attempts at vomiting there is a peculiar expression of countenance always attending and an alarmed or wild glaring of the eyes; his breath is expressive with an unyielding state of the bowels; his pulse is such as has been frequently mistaken to denote inflammatory action but so erroneous is the practice necessarily deduced from that impression that it

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remarks peculiar attention: it is full, seeming strong and always to believe compressible, which beyond all doubt evinces the nature of the case for the ease with which it is compressed informs of the weakness of the action. He becomes extremely restless and is incapable of remaining stationary or fixing his attention steadily for any length of time on any single object: his limbs require a habit of trembling which bears some resemblance to the effects of an ague and has occasioned the disease to be variously named. By some it has been called Mania à Semulentia Febris Semulenta, Delirium Tremens &c. This convulsive action of the muscles is exceedingly irregular and frequently excites alarm; the extent to which it at times is carried adds so inordinately to his strength as to defeat the strenuous endeavours of two or three persons to retain him; the exertion is but momentary and is succeeded by a corresponding state of great debility. The skin sometimes preserves its natural temperature but generally is hot and dry. nevertheless it is

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variable and sometimes moist. The face becomes suffused. The pulsations of the carotids generally increase and the patient complains of intolerable pain in the head. The symptoms go on gradually exacerbating and the patients mind becomes remarkably affected. From the commencement a confusion of ideas and indistinctness of conception now and then present themselves. It is usual in such disorders for him to be directed attentions and anxiety to himself explaining the cause of fear. The insanability of mind, or rather the disordered faculty of association in time becomes more manifest and those delusions much more frequently mislead him. Often through the night he is perfectly delirious but in the day much more composed. This partial state in time submits to a more permanent delirium. His speech is wild incoherent and unconnected but most frequently he insists upon the veracity of his vagrant stories and tells them with apparent plausibility. His imagination never rests but always

in the song engrossed and absorbed. His attention allows no ease but wearies and disturbs him. Led by intuitive flights of fancy in concerning the most erroneous and wild conjectures, he imagines that the floor of his chamber is bestrewed with rods and consequently saunters round the room continually stooping to collect the scattered pieces. Now he conceives that someone has offended him and he either reproaches with the most opprobrious epithets the airy object of his contumely or impetuously upraps the wall for its supposed insulting language. Again his ill constituted fancy conjures up a thousand frightful scenes and uses his endeavours to avoid them. He supposes that his room is all on flame and is anxious to escape the conflagration; he instantaneously rushes to leave the chamber but if delay ing by his attendant immediately repeaters the fell decree that would consign him to destruction. Mostly however he is mild and submissive to his keeper, not indulging in perverseness or contrariety.

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of conduct but subordinate to his immediate. The general tenor of behaviour appears to be interspersed by penitence contrition and passive submission evinces a perfect consciousness of impropriety of conduct in intoxication: The picture as thus drawn affords ample matter for reflection and might advantageously be turned to the suppression of the vice. How melancholy is the fact that the noblest gift to man should be subverted and destroyed by the habitual indulgence of potations whose excessive use is always injudicious and uniformly receives the stigma of disgrace. The period of usual continuation of this mania is irregular and is generally four or five days but may attend much longer; the greater the delay in producing convalescence the more difficult will be the prevention of morbid associations of ideas and restoration of the capacity of the sensorium to receive correct impressions of the senses. The prognostics in this disease will be derived from the appearances of the symptoms and attendant cir-

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-cumstances. The trembling disposition uniformly attending the complaint becoming increasingly increased; the anxiety and restlessness increased in degree; the coldness of temperature of the surface with cold clammy perspiration; hypocratic countenance and subsultus tendinum; prognosis unfavourably as to its termination. Appearances post mortem are what would be expected. The stomach is inflamed in which the neighbouring viscera participate; if the victim had been habituated in the practice of intoxication it is often found much thickened and considerably indurated; the brain is exceedingly congested with effusions frequently of serum in the lateral ventricles, the viscera of the abdomen & name likewise found surrounded by a quantity of water; and the liver like the brain is exceedingly engorged as would naturally be supposed from its extensive venous system; indeed upon dissection nothing is revealed but what would be inferred from a knowledge of his previous habits.

The treatment is next in consideration and is

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marked by no little diversity of opinion. As all enquiries into the nature of diseases are directed with a view to the improvement of the practice, so it demands the most decided attention, and requires actual knowledge and experience to substantiate the method independent of the theory upon which it rests. Genius and talents upon principles of deduction may erect a theory whose exterior splendour will glisten with plausibility and defy even scrutiny of argument, but the sanction of experience, unbiased by prejudice the only fair and unequivocal test, must contribute its approbation or it cannot be adopted with reliance or pursued with confidence. Let it not be inferred that I disclaim all rational deductions, that I reject reason and argument from medicine. I believe that inferences may be drawn from facts and practice qualified accordingly; but the expansive field for a variety of theories, in the hands of capacity and genius may be perverted and distorted to meet a

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pursuit remedial plan and supported by cun-
-ning and ingenuity, may evade detection of its fal-
-lacy. The premises being true may lull suspicion
into sweet and conceal the erroneous deduction. The
propriety of blood letting has been a theme of con-
-tention and Dr Potter of the University of Maryland
is warm in its advocation. As the disease most
generally appears it is altogether inestimable and
will induce an irretrievable state of debility and
exhaustion. In a few cases where the constitution
of the patient has not been impaired on by habitual intem-
-perance and debauchery, and is seen by the Phy-
-sician in the incipiency of the disease with a
pulse full, strong and not very readily compressi-
-ble, with unusual determination to the head,
it must immediately be used and always with
advantage; but the occurrence of those cases are
comparatively few and a recurrence to the lancet
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consequence. It is only since the time for the medicine to operate to excite considerable reaction that venesection would be proper or at all admissable. When the skin is hot and dry with constipation of the bowels the propriety of producing an active evacuation must be evident. The necessity in all diseases of the intestines of the bowels has settled down into universal admission. To obtain the desirable end the most efficacious and advisable method is divided portions of Calomel and Jalap. Though it is well known that patients in the disease cannot endure the action of purgative medicines to any extent and that exhaustion is the consequence of perseverance in the practice it is nevertheless essential to procure a motion and maintain a freedom remedying the subsequent debility by the exhibition of wine, ~~the sudorific medicines~~ opium and the like. When an evacuation is obtained the administration of Opium and Ipecacuanha will be demanded, for the exhaustion is considerable and attended with excessive restlessness

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The effect of this medicine is to lull the system into quietude excite declining action and to obtain sleep, from which the patient usually wakes so astonishingly improved as to induce the most heartfelt satisfaction of the utility of the practice. The affusion of the surface with warm water in which has been dissolved a quantity of Muriate of Soda, as noticed by Dr Armstrong has in my humble opinion been too much unheeded. From the known composition of the venous system which exists and the certain tendency of the affusion is to remove the sluggish motion of the veins by exciting them to action, most pointedly concur to recommend its use. The opium which should afterwards be used is aided also in its operation by the previous ablution. It is not in every instance that we commence the treatment with a purgative for its immediate use is contraindicated by the feeble conditions of the patient; pale and trembling features, fluttering pulse with moisture

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of the surface. In such a case we unhesitatingly resort to the use of laudanum, hot toddy and Ammonia. Should a tranquil sleep succeed the exhibition of these articles the same success will attend to a dose may be expected. The bowels, must be solubly kept open maintained throughout the course of the disease by the administration of Calomel and Opium three grains of the former to one and a half of the latter two or three times in the twenty four hours. As the ultimatum of our wishes is only to be consummated by the action of the Opium on the system, every thing tending to impede the acquisition of sleep should be removed. But objects are not as readily obtained as described. The insusceptibility of the system is frequently so great as not to be affected even by unusual quantities of Opium. It then becomes our duty to arouse the patient from this torpid state and create susceptibility to remedial agencies by the action

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of emetics. It must be borne in mind that of exhaustion of the powers of life be very considerable, to venture on the exhibition of emetics would be hazardous to the patient. But if it be concluded to resort to them the same cause that renders their use essential, requires them to be exhibited in an increased quantity. Rather than produce emesis by Tartras Antimonii, which requires ten grains or more to effect its purpose, and is harsh in its operation attended with great nausea, it is much more preferable to use the combination of Ipecac and Tartar in the proportions of a scruple to two grains. After vomiting and free vomiting in which most generally a brownish plaiti-lind is thrown up, the susceptibility of the system is increased and the patient much improved. So much importance is attached in the hands of some practitioners to the emetic course of treatment that their principal reliance is on it with Opium. When judiciously recurred to its advantage is

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immense; it requires to be frequently repeated when it mitigates the trembling habit commonly remove the maniacal state and substitutes tranquility and calmness. By the operation on the bowels which the repeated exhibition of croton invariably produces, other cathartics are to be used with; but they cannot be made use of but in the early stage, for the improper administration in the latter course of the disease has proved destructive to the patient. So much importance is the obtaining of sleep that no exertion should be spared to call the patient in the soothing arms of Morpheus. I do not recollect that there ever was an instance of recovery which had not been preceded by, or indeed which had not been attributed to sleep. It is of such magnitude as to be emphatically styled by Dr Chapman the "sine qua non" of recovery. The practice of exhibiting opium in mental maniac were wine &c must be pursued and by attention to the varying state of the system, the

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indications will be evident. In a few days from the commencement either from neglect, mismanagement or a procrastinated call for a Physician, the Typhoid stage succeeds, wherein all the attention is required to arrest the progress of exhaustion. The dry and parched tongue encrusted teeth, nervous tremors, burning skin and subsultus tendinum are evidence of this state, and Volatile Alkali, Camphor and Brandy are liberally demanded to stay the declining system and prevent approaching dissolution. By a steady continuance and perseverance in this manner we may subvert the diseased order of actions and establish convalescence. Even on the recovery there are what should be attended to, but nothing that can escape the eye of the careful and discerning physician. What most demands attention is a state of watchfulness which often supervenes and should be counteracted, as it is distressing to the patient and hurtful to his health. To arrest this morbid vigilance,

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cases, more is requisite than the exhibition of Lops in tea or Hoffman's anodyne liquor. In the treatment of this disease I have summarily delivered what I believe the best adapted practice and which will prove in contending with the disorder fully equal to the cure. It is one of the many diseases to which the human frame is liable from the liberal use of spirituous liquors. A more pernicious habit no where can exist; it engenders depravity of the morals and the mind. It becomes the duties as guardians of health to detect and expose all frauds to life. A sacred duty is in them invested which should be religiously discharged. The use of ardent spirits is an open gate at which a train of fell diseases enter, with profanity and immorality and every vice dancing their attendance. By a happy change from debauchery and inebriation the door to Bacchanalian sports were closed and use of spirits were deserted; disorders of the human frame would be extensively cur-

[illegible] and [illegible] happiness [illegible] the [illegible] depositary of [illegible] [illegible] such a fortune the event is [illegible] to be [illegible] for [illegible] to be [illegible]. The fatal tenacity of corrupt desires is only to be [illegible] by an indulgence, and though by a continual [illegible] to destructive use we may restrain it in a measure and thereby ameliorate the otherwise [illegible] licentiousness, we cannot entirely eradicate [illegible] by time and [illegible] overturn the [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible]. I fear that the [illegible] of the remedial agency of [illegible] may not [illegible], unless the community and that [illegible] of [illegible] habits of intoxication or too liberal indulgence, may serve to induce them more obstinately to [illegible] has led Dr Rush to denounce the [illegible] [illegible] and advise the popular [illegible] to be checked by [illegible] causing its [illegible] [illegible] after [illegible] exposition of the baneful tendency of the destructive article, we still perceive the [illegible] a

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=tion is continued, there remains no stain upon the conscience; fair and unsullied as the unwritten paper it may behold the ravages of obstina=cy without compunction.

Thus Gentlemen I have concluded my inaugu=ral essay, with feelings indescribable does the curtain fall upon the last exertion of a students duty. A tribunal as just as eminent will prono=unce my fate and with a confident reliance on the Fathers of my Alma Mater I anxiously wait your final judgement, which will either be the morning star that fires me to emulate your glorious course, or a setting sun enshrouding me in darkness never to be dispersed. The ever memorable day on which your decision will be proclaimed is as critical to mortality, as the day of judgement, to Eternity.

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Maria a Potu.

James Washington